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Lucia A Keegan 08/22/2006 10:18:19 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Lebanon - Cease-Fire Violation -
UNIFIL U.S. Foreign Policy: Middle East - Iran
PARIS - Monday, August 21, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Lebanon - Cease-Fire Violation - UNIFIL
U.S. Foreign Policy: Middle East - Iran

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Front-pages this Monday are overwhelmingly devoted to Segolene Royal, the Socialist hopeful for the 2007 Presidential elections, after Sunday's Socialist Party's traditional "Rose Fest." Le Figaro reports her attacks on Interior Minister Sarkozy, "mainly about his immigration policy." Electronic media are replaying her sound-bite on "immigration choisi" (selected immigration): "After taking the natural resources of these countries - former colonies- we are now taking their brains? This is unbearable." The harsh editorial in Le Figaro, entitled "Segolene's Blabbering," contends that "it is difficult to figure out what her plans for France are: we keep looking in vain for them." Liberation announces on its front page

that "she gets her inspiration for 2007 from Mitterrand." In his editorial, Jean-Michel Thenard says "she is in a favorable position to get the Socialist party's nomination this November." A separate article explains that "her being a woman in a party dominated by men is an absolute weapon." Le Parisien's optimistic headline reads: "She's Off." Results of a Le Parisien poll indicate that 54% of the French give her their support.

International news is dominated by Israel's cease-fire violation in Lebanon and the confusion about UNIFIL's leadership, after Israel called on Italy to be the lead. A report in Le Figaro emphasizes: "Once again there is no love lost between Israel and France." In Le Monde, Philippe Boloignon describes France's offer of "200 men disappointing for the UN." (See Part C) Le Figaro announces that a EU-25 meeting is scheduled "probably" for Wednesday, after FM Douste-Blazy called for "European solidarity" and "clarification" on each nation's contributions. TF1 television also reported on FM Douste-Blazy's call for "an effort" to be made by other European countries, while governments are insisting on clarification of the chain of command and the rules of engagement before sending soldiers. FR2 television reported Washington's insistence for "a rapid deployment of the UNIFIL in Lebanon."

In La Croix, France's General Pellegrini is quoted: "I see the future with apprehension... Everything is frozen. Everyone has kept their weapons, but no one is using them."

La Croix reports "the truce is in danger in Lebanon" after Israel's "murderous expedition" there and quotes Lebanese PM Fouad Siniora as calling the raid a "crime against humanity," while UNSG Kofi Annan qualified the attacks as "a violation of the cessation of hostilities." Le Parisien's weekend edition asks "What Purpose Do the Blue Helmets Serve?" The article enumerates four flaws of the "'thing' that de Gaulle decried." For Le Parisien, "the blue helmets do not prevent massacres," "their presence in a country does not avoid war," "they are often incapable of defending themselves," and "they do not hasten the settling of crises." The article notes that the UN's good intentions are often succeeded by setbacks and failures.

Communist L'Humanite devotes its front page to America's foreign policy in the Middle East and headlines: "We Need to Stop Bush!" and adds: "Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon: The U.S. President programmed these conflicts... Tomorrow, Iran?" In Le Journal du Dimanche an analysis entitled "Iran Flexes Its Muscles" contends: "The Lebanese conflict was a dress rehearsal for a U.S. attack on Iran." Both L'Humanite and Le Journal du Dimanche quote Hershel's analysis in the New Yorker. (See Part C)

Georges Malbrunot in Le Figaro on Saturday reveals that Lebanese investigators looking into the assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafic Hariri "are onto a new trail that leads straight to Hezbollah." The new elements in the investigation, however, do not lessen the fact that Syria continues to be the main focus... "but Hezbollah obviously had a role to play: 'who else could have brought 1200 kilos of TNT into Lebanon?' sources close to Hariri's son Saad wonder... In any event, by implicating Hezbollah in the assassination of Hariri, Syria has a way of keeping a hold on Nasrallah." The article goes on to assess the possible involvement of Iran in the murder and concludes that in the "current context in the region, the findings of the investigation could be explosive by aggravating tensions between Sunnis and Shiites."

All networks reported on "the reinforcement of security in Baghdad." FR2 television said that the situation in Iraq was "chaos," a term echoed in L'Humanite's extended report on U.S. foreign policy: "Iraq, the other 'created chaos...' is plunged in civil war, an avowal of failure for Washington's 'war against terrorism.'"

TF1 and FR2 television mentioned the resumption of Hussein's second trial for crimes against humanity. TF1 said that he will be defended by twelve lawyers who will plead "self-defense."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Lebanon - Cease-Fire Violation - UNIFIL

"The UN Calls on the Europeans"

Philippe Boloïon in left-of-center Le Monde (08/21): "On Friday, the pressure on France was intensified with the UN clearly stating that France's contingent was 'disappointing...' President Bush, whose assistance to the UNIFIL will be strictly logistical, said 'France said it would send soldiers. We hope it will send more of them.' In an interview in regional Ouest France, Jean-Marc Guehenno, who is in charge of peacekeeping forces at the UN, declared that 'France must be the backbone. And even if France must not shoulder the entire burden, it needs to give the signal of a significant contribution, because everyone is observing France before making a commitment...' And as Europe's media lashed out at France for its meager offering, MOD Alliot-Marie on Friday said on RTL radio that 'France needed extremely precise missions and that it had not forgotten the painful experience of Bosnia.'"

"Dissipating Ambiguity"

Left-of-center Le Monde's editorial (08/19): "For the past month France was seriously committed to finding a solution to the Lebanese conflict other than military. It managed to get the support of the U.S. and impose its views on a UN resolution unanimously accepted. These results came about because of France's commitment regarding the UNIFIL. Washington relented only because France accepted to play a major role in the force... France's subsequent attitude has caused some confusion. The idea that France would takeover command of the force, a given in New York, has been undermined, leading the Washington Post to title 'Where Have the French Gone?' While Chirac and France have a right to expect a clearly defined mission, Lebanon is not Bosnia... It is essential to worry about disarming Hezbollah. If France were to renege on being the backbone of the force, it would be giving free rein to Hezbollah to rebuild its 'state within a state.' This signal would be all the more dangerous because it would mark Iran's victory. If on the other hand France's present attitude is simply to ensure the safety of its troops, it is a legitimate stance. President Chirac needs to clarify this ambiguity."

"A Disappointing French Offer"

Marc Henry in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/21): "Israel has asked Italy to lead the UNIFIL although France had declared itself ready to take command. In the tumultuous relations between France and Israel, once again there is no love lost... Israel's bitter disappointment is all the more painful because France was to be the 'core' contingent of the force... This initial 'lack' on the part of France is a hard blow for Olmert who was hoping for a 'credible' presence in Southern Lebanon to curb Hezbollah's bellicose intentions. Israel's pullout plan is now somewhat compromised... by France's tepid stance, which has awakened the old reflexes of distrust and hostility between France and Israel. While it is difficult to see where the truth lies, one thing is certain: France is playing the role of scapegoat."

U.S. Foreign Policy: Middle East - Iran

"Iran Flexes Its Muscles"

Antoine Malo in right-of-center Le Journal du Dimanche (08/20): "Iran is proceeding with important military maneuvers. Important forces are being deployed throughout the country... Iran knows that in America's neo-conservative circles, the push is for a military attack (on Iran) to destroy its nuclear installations. And time, for Iran, is short: on Tuesday, Tehran will probably announce it is rejecting the UNSC's proposal to suspend its uranium enrichment. According to Seymour Hersh, the war which opposed Israel to Hezbollah was but a dress rehearsal to a possible preemptive U.S. attack on Iran. According to him, Americans and Israelis had planned this even before the kidnapping of the two Israeli soldiers... The only hitch is that the operation failed. As of Tuesday, a reinforced Iran will be opposing the international community."

"Choosing Bloody Disorder"

Patrick-Apel-Muller in communist l'Humanite (08/21): "The U.S. is pursuing its strategy of domination which has led to reviving tensions: Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon - by proxy- and tomorrow Iran. With the multiplication of conflicts, the White House is looking to remodel a Greater Middle East that will be under its boot, with total control of its oil reserves... The new world order is a bloody disorder. Never has the image of the U.S. been so tarnished... And as a new source of tension emerges with Iran's probable answer tomorrow, the U.S., while threatening to impose

economic sanctions, dreams of a military intervention. France must be Europe's engine to counter this madness." HOFMANN